mental illness: either improved hospital treatment or community supervision may be credited with responsibility for this. But alongside this fall in readmissions, there has been a rise in first admissions.

Further chapters deal with birthplace, marriage, education, rural or urban environment, religion, and clinical diagnosis of the patients. On alcohol there is a most informative chapter. In conclusion, the changing incidence of the various forms of mental illness is demonstrated, and the supposed increase of mental disorders is shown to be largely due to the extremely long hospital stay of these patients: nearly 80 per cent of the available beds were occupied by chronic patients, and the average duration of stay was increasing.

In his introduction, Dr. Dayton truly says that a study of mental disorders as a broad sociological and administrative problem has been one of the crying needs of psychiatry. It provides the necessary counterpart to the minute studies of individuals, which fill the technical journals. It is hard to understand how the meagre statistics ordinarily available could have been regarded as adequate to answer the questions which so materially affect this branch of the public health services.

AUBREY LEWIS.

SOCIOLOGY

Mass Observation: *War Factory.* London, 1943. Gollancz. Pp. 127. Price 4s. 6d.

A WAR factory is set down in singularly unsuitable quarters, a large country house beside a small country town. Some of the employees are locals, but the majority come from outside. How does it work? The natives quite definitely dislike the intrusion and have little in common with the immigrants. These latter dislike the work and find their leisure extremely dull; outside the very long working hours there is little to do. Whether living in billets or at home, they have no housework with which to occupy themselves. There is, however, something really good to be said: the position is accepted as one that has to be endured—"for the duration." This view prevents the immigrants from making any attempt to settle down.

There is a machine shop and an assembly room. In the former the observer, a college graduate working incognito, noted that one of the happiest workers was one of the dullest. This bears out, of course, the experience of the Institute of Industrial Psychology, which found that in repetition work the dullest and the ablest, who probably day-dream all the time, get on best.

It probably also explains why, in spite of fatigue, the last hours are often more productive in output. All become duller. The girls themselves often remarked that the time from dinner to the tea-break lagged horribly, but thereafter the time seemed to pass much more quickly. So, too, in shops provided with intricate self-feeding plant, there is a type of very conscientious workman who cannot let well alone in the morning. He is always stopping the machine to fiddle with some nut. We used to call him "the man with the spanner." In the late afternoon, he stands aside and lets the machine run, with great advantage to output. The girls prefer male charge-hands to female; the former are inclined to chaff them as little nit-wits, but one who was politically-minded cut no ice. The older women and the younger ones, with husbands serving, take their war work very seriously; not so those without such ties. There is a fair amount of wasted time. High faluting patriotic posters are probably valueless. An exhibition of the finished article in which they can see their part arouses some interest. Fines or money inducements are of little effect, as is shown by the fact that if a girl wants time off in the late afternoon she doesn't hesitate, though the hours lost are those paid at overtime rates. There is a moderate amount of grousing against a mysterious "they," which seems to include all in authority from Mr. Bevin down to the foremen and charge-hands, but this, after all, is a national characteristic and does not herald revolution. The manager, when he appeared and made one or two speeches, was considered sym-

pathetic and quite met with approval. In the canteen there was considerable snobbery, more from girls from rather better homes who, at times, characterized the food which the observer found excellent as "muck." But here again would not the all-seeing eye at times catch out most of us in silly affectations?

It is well to remember that repetition work under any social system must be a dull job. The reward to the producer for this dullness is that as consumer he shares in the production resulting from the repetition work of others. So to each there is a personal equation in peace-time—how much dull time can I endure for such rewards, and how much free time shall I have in which to enjoy them? No sane man would endure a life sentence at picking oakum for the sake of a million pounds. Some might endure some years for such a reward. The greater their intellectual resources, the less they would be attracted by any such material recompense.

What I think is really distressing is the inability to amuse oneself in one's spare time. After the weekly visit to the pictures, if there is no dance, there is nothing to fall back upon. The most obvious cause of this is the decay of reading. What is wrong with our system of education to account for this? It is not for lack of material; books are within the reach of all. Has there been a fall in the level of our national intelligence? The Commons in the "nineties" included such men as Lecky, Kelvin, Morley, Jebb, Bryce, Trevelyan, Haldane, and Balfour. And at present, after our Prime Minister—what? And this is, perhaps, too hard on the present Commons, because can we match such a team outside? Or is it the curriculum? Do we know what we want to be at? Or again, the teachers—are they, perforce, soul destroyers instead of soul inspirers? All one can say is that in reading one has the finest and most profitable escape from drabness, and yet few go through that door.

Mass Observation has done a good little piece of work. We know too seldom what others really think. Many of the politically-minded profess to know. A few are more honest. I once attended a lecture of the Institute of Industrial Psychology. The speaker was an M.P. He asked what the unemployed were thinking, and suggested that nobody really knew. He himself knew what three or four were thinking about—that was all. The speaker's name was James Maxton.

B. S. BRAMWELL.

Elwin, Verrier. *The Agaria.* India, 1942. Price, Rupees 12.8. London, 1943. Humphrey Milford. Pp. xxxii + 292. Price 21s.

THE Agaria are the iron-smelters and blacksmiths of the Central Provinces of India. They live in small groups mainly in the Maikal Hills and Bilaspur, but also scattered here and there over a wide belt of country running from Dindori to Neterhat. The census of 1911 gives their number as 9,500. They tend to share the customs and institutions of the Baiga, the Gonds and other peoples in whose villages they live, but, like many other groups of primitive iron-workers, in Africa and elsewhere, they are treated as outcastes by their hosts.

The most interesting part of the book is undoubtedly the full material it gives on the whole process of iron-working in this area. Mr. Elwin lived five years within sound of the bellows of one of the Agaria smithies, and made numerous tours in the district. He has had the help of chemical analysts of the Tata Iron and Steel Company, which also made financial contributions to the publication of the work. The book gives a full account of the distribution of iron ore and associated metals in the Central Provinces, an outline of the history of iron-working in India, and some useful bibliographical references. Some of the myths of the Agaria are given, and these, as might have been anticipated, make constant reference to the origin of the craft and the magic associated with it. Mr. Elwin adds a comparative sketch of magic beliefs associated with iron-workers, smithies, and iron itself, in Africa and other parts of the world, and shows the similarity of many of the Agaria